

# NOMINATION PROPOSAL - FLORIDA

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

DIVISION OF ARCHIVES, HISTORY AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Sears, Roebuck and Co. Department Store

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1300 Biscayne Boulevard

CITY, TOWN

Miami

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Florida

COUNTY

Dade

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

### CATEGORY

\_\_\_ DISTRICT  
☒ BUILDING(S)  
\_\_\_ STRUCTURE  
\_\_\_ SITE  
\_\_\_ OBJECT

### OWNERSHIP

\_\_\_ PUBLIC  
☒ PRIVATE  
\_\_\_ BOTH  
PUBLIC ACQUISITION  
\_\_\_ IN PROCESS  
\_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

### STATUS

\_\_\_ OCCUPIED  
☒ UNOCCUPIED  
\_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS  
ACCESSIBLE  
\_\_\_ YES: RESTRICTED  
\_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED  
☒ NO

### PRESENT USE

\_\_\_ AGRICULTURE  
\_\_\_ COMMERCIAL  
\_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL  
\_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT  
\_\_\_ GOVERNMENT  
\_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL  
\_\_\_ MILITARY  
\_\_\_ MUSEUM  
\_\_\_ PARK  
\_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
\_\_\_ RELIGIOUS  
\_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC  
\_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION  
☒ OTHER: vacant

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Sears, Roebuck and Co. TX Department 568-S

STREET & NUMBER

675 Ponce de Leon Avenue, N.E.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

ZIP CODE

30395

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Dade County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

73 West Flagler Street

CITY, TOWN

Miami

STATE

Florida

ZIP CODE

33130

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

1. Dade County Historic Survey
2. City of Miami Heritage Conservation Program

DATE

1. 1978
2. 1983

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE 1 COUNTY 2 LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

1. Metro-Dade Community & Economic Development, Historic Preservation Div.
2. City of Miami Planning Department

CITY, TOWN

1. & 2. Miami

STATE

Florida

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☒ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

### SUMMARY OF PRESENT AND ORIGINAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Sears, Roebuck and Co. Department Store is a four story Art Deco style commercial building located at the entrance to uptown Miami. Rectangular in plan, the building features a seven story tower placed on a 45 degree angle on its southeast corner. The building is of reinforced concrete construction with a smooth stucco surface and is decorated with a variety of low relief ornamentation. Although several additions have been made to the building, none compromise its basic integrity. Several smaller buildings and a surface parking lot are also located on the property, which covers an entire city block.

### TEXT SUPPORTING SUMMARY OF PRESENT AND ORIGINAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on the northwest corner of Biscayne Boulevard and N.E. 13th Street, the Sears, Roebuck and Co. Department Store is a detached building which fronts directly on the sidewalk. Topped with a flat roof, the building originally featured four bays across the east (front) facade and six bays across the south facade.

The verticality of the building is emphasized by engaged, fluted piers which divide each bay and by the octagonal tower. The tower, the building's most prominent feature, is decorated with intricate, low relief ornamentation, in a variety of stylized designs. A panel of birds and flowers adorns the lower portion of the tower, while ziggurats, floriated patterns, and a zig-zag decorative band outline the parapet. On top are two large Sears signs that replace the original vertical sign running the length of the tower.

The main entrance to the building is located in the second bay on the east facade and features a pair of modern, aluminum and glass doors, topped with a transom. The entrance is flanked by heavy, fluted piers and is topped with a panel containing the store's name.

Store windows on the first story are fixed, with four large glass panels. The original transoms over the windows are now covered, and metal awnings have replaced the original striped, canvas awnings. Windows on the other three stories are grouped in threes and are double hung metal sash with one over one lights.

In addition to the decoration on the tower, the main building is embellished with a band of chevron designs along the parapet and zig-zag motifs between the first and second story windows. A floriated band is located above the second story windows over the main entrance. The vertical fluting which separates each bay is further emphasized on the first story by slightly projecting fluted piers topped by stylized ziggurats.



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Large additions have been made to the building at two different times in its history. In the early 1930's, a two story structure directly north of the Sears store was annexed. This building, also constructed in 1929, originally housed a Burdines Department Store. That store, however, was forced to close shortly after opening because of the Depression.

Although not part of the original Sears building, the Burdines annex maintains a continuity of design due to its similar scale, setback, and use of materials. The building features a stepped facade in the central bay, highlighting the main entrance. The recessed doorway is flanked by native keystone and is topped with a large panel of glass block. Keystone also defines the foundation of the building. Large, store windows with metal awnings are located on either side of the main entrance.

A one story service station was added to the south facade of the Sears building in 1934. This addition was enclosed, and a second and third story were added in 1958. This addition, located on the western three bays of the south facade, respects the main building in scale, materials, and detailing. The southern end of the addition features an octagonal corner, echoing the octagonal tower. Low relief ornamentation decorates the first story, while the second and third stories are plain. Awning windows, grouped in banks of four, pierce the upper two stories.

Also, located on the site on the southwest corner are a two story automobile service station with two attached service bays and an open garage. The remainder of the site is a surface parking lot.

The Sears building is currently boarded up, and the interior is not accessible.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW		
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1929

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Harrison Construction Co. (Miami FL)  
Nimmons, Carr & Wright (Chicago IL)

## SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sears, Roebuck and Co. Department Store is significant in the history of architecture, commerce, and community planning in Miami. Built in 1929, the Sears building is one of the finest examples of Art Deco style architecture in Miami and embodies the distinctive features of that style as applied to a large, commercial structure. The building, moreover, is the earliest known example of the Art Deco style in Dade County, predating the Art Deco buildings on Miami Beach by almost six years. The opening of the Sears store on Biscayne Boulevard marked the culmination of efforts to establish a new shopping area for Greater Miami. The building, therefore, reflects the City's changing attitude toward commercial development in the late 1920's, brought about by the growing use of the automobile which led to the decentralization of shopping areas.

## TEXT SUPPORTING SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

During the late 1920's, Sears, Roebuck and Co. was opening a new store every two working days. South Florida's first Sears store, selling only tires and auto accessories, opened in 1928 in an older, four story building at 835 West Flagler Street. The immediate success of this store and a careful survey of the community by company experts prompted Sears to build a larger, retail department store on Biscayne Boulevard in the following year. Groundbreaking for the new store took place on May 15, 1929, and the official opening was held on November 14, 1929. Established at a cost of \$750,000, the Biscayne store was the thirty-third store in Sears' southern territory and the third store for Florida.

Heralded as a great event for Miami, the opening of the store captured the City's attention. During the opening ceremonies, Mayor C. H. Reeder characterized the new store as "the finest store in the south."<sup>5</sup> The Miami Daily News published a special, eight-page supplement on Sears, and the opening received widespread publicity elsewhere. As a result, more than 6,000 people visited the store during its first two hours of operation.

Designed by the prominent Chicago architectural firm of Nimmons, Carr and Wright, the Sears building is typical of the many stores that the firm designed for Sears and reflects the firm's philosophy in the design of these buildings. The choice of "modern" design to express the form and proportion of the entire composition and its parts is evident in the Biscayne Boulevard store. George Nimmons expressed his firm's design philosophy in a 1928 article in The American Architect:



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The architectural treatment of the exterior design of these [retail store] buildings represents an effort to design in conformity with the modern movement. No historic style of architecture was followed, but the expression of the plan and arrangement of the parts of the building, together with the features of its construction were made the basis of the design. In nearly every case the vertical lines of construction were marked by strong piers or projections, and no cornices whatever were used. Forms and proportions of the whole composition and its parts were depended upon principally for the effects or design in each case. Features of importance were emphasized in a simple way by enrichments of stone carving in low relief.

The Biscayne store embodies many design features of Art Deco style architecture, the style associated with Sears stores built during this period. Foremost among these is the central tower, a trademark of Sears. The pronounced verticality of the tower is emphasized by the building's engaged, fluted piers, a feature typical of the Art Deco style. Also noteworthy is the variety of low relief ornamentation, highlighting such building features as the tower, entrance, and roof line. Although the store on Biscayne Boulevard is one of hundreds of Sears buildings constructed throughout the country during the early twentieth century, it is the only such building in South Florida.

The development of Biscayne Boulevard into a major commercial thoroughfare was a business venture unparalleled in Miami's history. The Boulevard was envisioned by the Biscayne Boulevard Company as a complete shopping center, carefully designed for beauty and comfort, and located outside of the downtown district. Characterized as the "new Fifth Avenue of the South,"<sup>9</sup> the Boulevard became the forerunner of the modern shopping center, with developers recognizing the increasing importance of the automobile and planning for it.

The Sears store, located at the foot of Biscayne Boulevard where a traffic circle marked one of the busiest intersections in Miami, served to anchor the Biscayne Boulevard development. In deciding to locate its new retail store here, Sears officials stated that although the Boulevard was far removed from downtown Miami, customers would use their cars to get to the store. Therefore, the abundance of parking spaces was of prime importance in the selection of a location. In basing its decision on such a factor, Sears foreshadowed the course of development in Miami for the next several decades.

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The prominent location of the building on Biscayne Boulevard has made the Sears store a landmark in uptown Miami. This location, at the crossroads of the major north-south traffic artery in 1920's Miami with the County causeway that connected Miami and Miami Beach, was, and still is, a major focus of activity. The Sears building strongly marks that spot.

Although the Sears store opened just as the country was entering the Depression, it survived and even flourished. The Burdines Department Store next door, however, did not, and Sears soon expanded into that two story building. The Sears building has remained relatively unaltered during its 55-year history, and those changes and additions that have been made do not compromise the building's integrity.

The Sears building has been vacant since June 1983 when company officials closed the oldest South Florida store. Although the building's future remained in jeopardy for an extended period of time following its closing, the building is now likely to be sold to a developer who hopes to utilize the 25 percent Investment Tax Credit to rehabilitate the structure.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Metropolitan Dade County, From Wilderness to Metropolis, 1982, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup>"Fiftieth Year Celebrated," The Gold Coaster, March 1978, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>"Sears, Roebuck Store Opened by Miami Mayor," Miami Daily News, November 14, 1929.

<sup>4</sup>"1929-Biscayne Opens," The Gold Coaster, March 1978, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>"Sears, Roebuck Store Opened by Miami Mayor," Miami Daily News, November 14, 1929.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>George C. Nimmons, "The New Renaissance in Architecture," The American Architect, 1928, pp. 144, 148.

<sup>8</sup>"Boulevard Is Merger of Two Developments," The Miami Herald, July 28, 1929.

<sup>9</sup>"Store Mobbed At Opening," The Gold Coaster, March 1978, p. 6



## 9 BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Boulevard is Merger of Two Developments." The Miami Herald, July 28, 1929.

Dade County, Florida. Community and Economic Development. Historic Preservation Division. Dade County Historic Survey, Site Inventory file for 1300 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Florida.

"Eight Modern Department Stores." The Architectural Forum. Vol. 58, No. 5, May 1933, pp. 357-372.

Epstein, Steven. "Sears." (Unpublished Research Report). Copy on file in City of Miami Planning Department, Miami, Florida, 1979.

(see continuation sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Site Size (Approx. Acreage of Property):

approximately 4.5 acres

UTM Coordinates:

1,7 5,8,1 2,0,0 2,8 5,2 2,1,0  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

Township	Range	Section

LOCATION SKETCH OR MAP

N

See attached map

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Tract "A" of the plat of BOULEVARD TRACT, as recorded in Plat Book 100 at Page 65, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

### LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Sarah Eaton, Historic Preservation Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Dade Heritage Trust

STREET & NUMBER

190 S.E. 12 Terrace

CITY OR TOWN

Miami

DATE

July 1984

TELEPHONE

(305) 358-9572

STATE

Florida

ZIP CODE

33131

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The Gold Coaster. (Newspaper Published for and by the Employees of the South Florida Sears Group). Vol. 10, No. 1, March 1978, pp. 2-7.

Metropolitan Dade County. From Wilderness to Metropolis. Miami: Franklin Press, Inc., 1982.

Nimmons, George C. "The New Renaissance in Architecture." The American Architect. Vol. 134, No. 2550, August 5, 1928, pp. 141-149.

"Sears, Roebuck and Co. Retail Stores." Architectural Record. Vol. 69, June 1931, pp. 490-491.

Sears, Roebuck and Co. Section. Miami Daily News, November 13, 1929.

"Sears, Roebuck Store Opened By Miami Mayor." Miami Daily News, November 14, 1929.

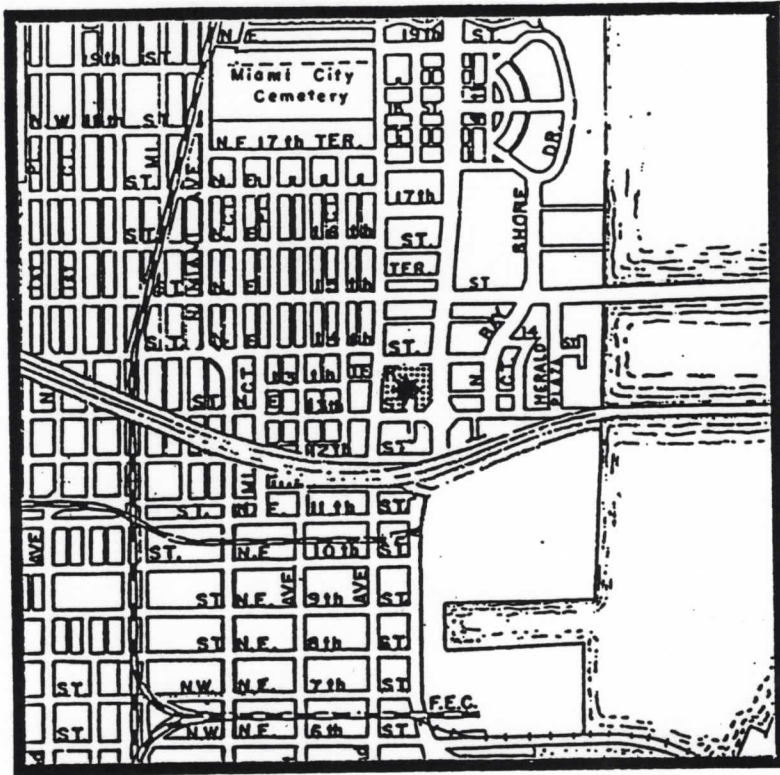
"Store of Sears, Roebuck and Co., Miami, Florida." Architecture. Vol. 62, October 1930, pp. 227-228.

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects. Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956.

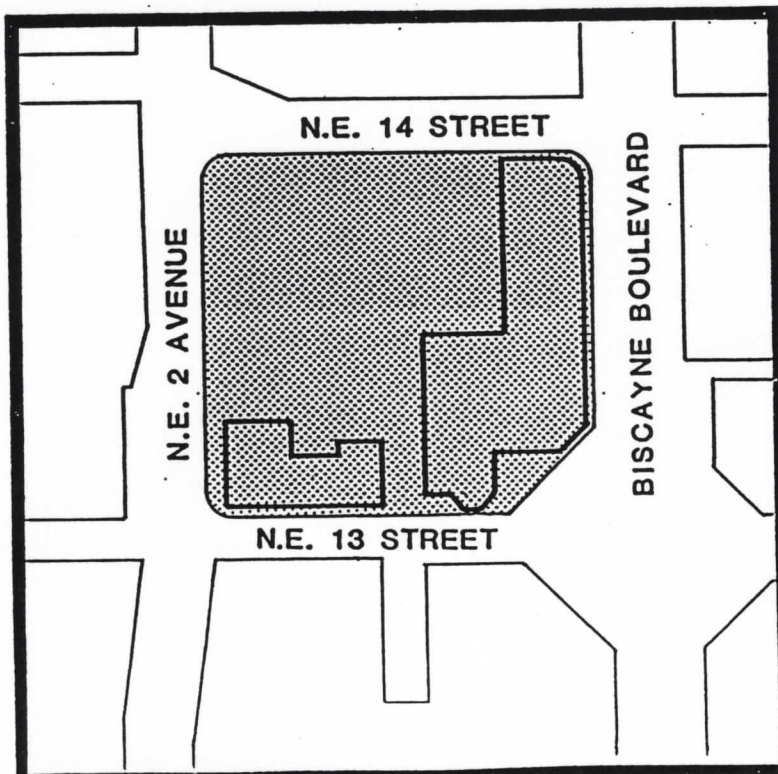


# SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO.

1300 BISCAYNE BOULEVARD



location.



site plan



